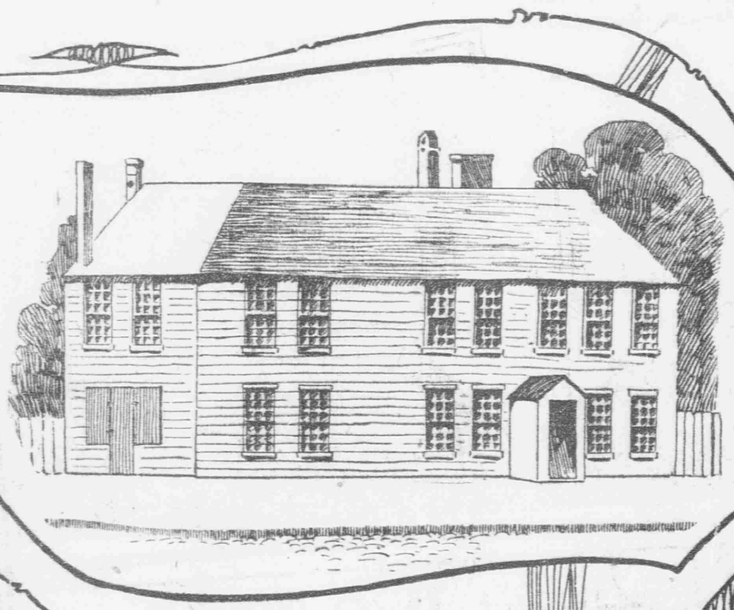
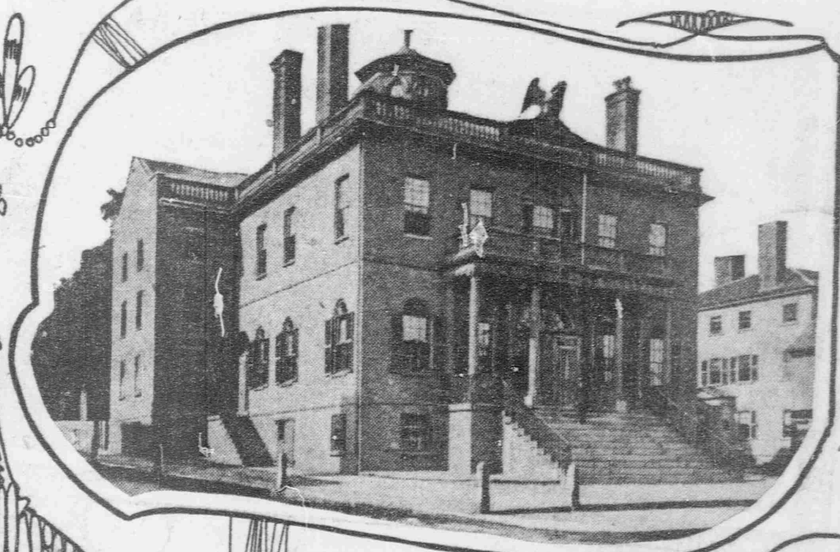
SCARLET LETTER HEROINE WHO INSPIRED HAWTHORNE



OLD BELL TAVERN, PEABODY, (NOW DESTROYED) WHERE ELIZA WHARTON DIED

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



CUSTOM HOUSE, SALEM, WHERE HAWTHORNE WROTE "THE SCARLET LETTER"

ELIZA WHARTON, HEROINE OF "THE SCARLET LETTER"

Romance and Tragedy of Elizabeth Wharton Who, as Hester Prynne, Still Wears the Famous Letter on Her Breast in the Gallery of Immortal Women Who Have Fallen, and Risen to Fame.

By MARY C. CRAWFORD.

THIS humble stone, in memory of Elizabeth Wharton, is inscribed by her weeping friends, to whom she endeared herself by her uncommon tenderness and affection. Endowed with superior genius and accomplishments, she was still more endeared by her humility and benevolence. Let candor throw a veil over her frailties, for great was her charity to others. She sustained the last painful scene far from every friend, and exhibited an example of calm resignation. Her departure was on the 25th of July, A. D., 1788, in the thirty-seventh year of her age, and the tears of strangers watered her grave.

ONLY six letters of this inscription have withstood the corroding touch of time on a modest stone which marks the Salem grave of the woman whose story inspired Nathaniel Hawthorne to write the most famous and powerful of his romances—"The Scarlet Letter." Her life was a romance of which the different chapters—so far as they are legible—were made up of mystery, sorrow and final tragedy. She died unknown, as she had lived. A half century passed, and then came Hawthorne. Since then, in the guise of Hester Prynne, she has worn the scarlet letter

A

upon her breast in the gallery of immortal women who have fallen and risen to fame.

Elizabeth Whitman—usually known as Eliza Wharton—was born in Hartford, Conn., one hundred and fifty years ago. Her father was the Rev. Elnathan Whitman, a graduate of Yale and minister of the Second Congregational Church of that city.

She was exceptionally well educated and that she possessed in marked degree a fine poetic talent some verses she left after her sad death clearly show. Eliza Wharton was a flower of fine Revolutionary New England, ruthlessly trampled upon by a fate which has visited few other women so harshly.

Her first lover was Rev. Joseph Howe, a minister like her father, and a young man of talent and piety who had been driven by the outbreak of the Revolution from his charge, the South Church, then on Church Green in Boston. He found shelter in the home of the Rev. Mr. Whitman and proceeded at once to fall in love with the beautiful Eliza. Then, because he was ardent and her father wished the match quite as much as because she herself cared for Howe, the betrothal was effected. But, always far from strong, the youth sickened and died soon after the engagement was announced, Eliza tenderly caring for him until the end. In one of the poems in which she laments her fate, Eliza thus refers to Howe:

First from my arms a dying lover torn,
In early life it was my fate to mourn,

But inasmuch as she had not given to Howe the love that a strong man could have aroused in her she did not drown herself in tears.

Quaint House of Life.

A tutor at Yale College was the next tenant in her quaint house of life. He, too, was a minister and his name was also Joseph—the Rev. Joseph Buckminster. From among the crowd of gallants paying her court while she was on a visit to the family of the president of Yale, Eliza accepted young Buckminster. But he, too, lacked the strength to meet the passion of his beautiful fiancee. It is not on record that she was even touched by his wooing, though she consented, for the sake of pleasing her family, to marry him.

This match was especially urged because the Revolution had created a stringency in the money market which made it very difficult for Dr. Whitman to support his large family on his meager income. Besides, girls were expected to marry early in those days, and since no one whom Eliza really loved had presented himself, it was felt by many that this was a very good chance for her to settle in life.

Still those friends who knew the strenuous nature of the girl did not counsel the match, and while Eliza was herself discussing the matter with one whom tradition says was her cousin—Judge Edwards—himself married, in the arbor of her garden, Buckminster surprised the pair, and in a jealous fury broke the engagement and departed to settle over a church in Portsmouth, N. H.

A Tragic Episode.

Despite this cruel and unjust desertion on the part of her lover, Eliza continued a brave, cheerful woman. She passed the bloom of her youth in pleasant and often charitable and helpful intercourse with her friends and was beloved of them all. Though twice cheated of marriage, she remained heart whole and fancy free, it appears.

The tragedy of her life came in maturer years. These years are a sealed book that many have vainly attempted to publish. No special charity has marked any of these attempts. One old novel, called "The Coquette," first published in 1800, claimed to relate the true story of her life, and on the strength of the claim ran through many editions soon after its publication. New Englanders of the day were intensely curious to know about Eliza Wharton, and Mistress Hannah Foster, the author of the spurious fiction, cleverly claimed to be a cousin of the unfortunate woman (who had died some twelve years before), and gave it out that she had come into the possession of many papers shedding light upon the mystery.

"The Coquette" version has it that Eliza had fallen victim to the passion of her cousin, Judge Pierrepont Edwards. Its charitable author places the worst possible construction upon the jealousy of Buckminster.

Faithful Unto Death.

According to what seems the trustworthy statement of a much later writer, however, Eliza Wharton was faithful unto death. Furthermore, says one authority, her relations to Judge Edwards were quite proper and there was no ground whatever for jealousy on the part of her affianced. This authority asserts that Eliza Wharton was married; that in her dying days the poetess showed no sense whatever of guilt and insisted that at her death her wedding ring should be buried with her. But this statement was made fifty years after her death and subsequent to the publication of the Hawthorne romance.

So if "The Coquette" did not show on its face that it was inaccurate one would incline to its story rather than the other, since it was written while the facts of the case were in the minds of many, and the Wharton family never by word or deed repudiated its statements. But the tragic sequel of her life probably disheartened her kinsfolk, and inasmuch as they had been financially unfortunate it is not so strange that they lacked the courage to deny the cruel allegations. That the story of the marriage was never verified nor the certificate ever brought to light is an indisputable fact. A Boccaccio without genius might have written "The Coquette."

A Salem Romance.

The authentic part of the story opens on a bright June day in 1788, which brought to the old Bell Tavern in Peabody, a Salem suburb, a woman who registered as Mrs. Walker, and said she would await her husband. She said he was coming in a few days. She wore a wedding ring, and both received and posted letters to her presumable husband.

Gentle and graceful in all that she did, she was soon the admired of all admirers in the little village. She would sit at the south window of her chamber, apparently watching for some one who never came, and the long hours of the languorous Summer days were whiled away with the guitar and the industrious needle. Some of that wondrous skill in sewing which Hawthorne makes one of the attributes of Hester Prynne, the lady certainly possessed. This skill in needlework, together with her pleasing ways, soon made the strange lady a favorite with the women of the town, and though they were of the strict Puritanical type and faith, they sympathized with her as she fashioned dainty little garments—and kept forever locked in her heart whatever tale she might have told.

The Last Rites.

One day Eliza wrote with chalk the letters E. W. before the door, but these were erased by some children during the afternoon. At dusk a soldierly looking man rode by, studied the door and, failing to note the erased chalk marks, passed on. Eliza, as she saw him pass, was heard to cry out something, and then—she fainted.

Soon afterward she died. She was buried by the villagers—the funeral being the largest that had ever occurred in Salem. A few weeks after her death an unknown man erected a sandstone tablet over the grave bearing the inscription noted.

To-day barely six inches of the weatherbeaten stone remains to be seen in the old Peabody cemetery of Salem.

A subsequent examination of her papers and effects failed to throw any light upon the mystery of her life. One letter, said to be in cipher originally, was found and was published in the Massachusetts Sentinel of September 20, 1788. This letter follows:

"Must I die alone? Shall I never see you more? I know that you will come, but you will come too late. This is, I fear, my last effort to write or do anything but weep. Why did you leave me in so much distress? But I will not reproach you. May God forgive in both what was amiss. When I go from hence I will leave you some way to find me. If I die and you remember me occasionally we may yet meet again."

A fragment from her poems written in the Peabody Tavern, is a pathetic swan song:

"O, Thou for whose dear sake I bear,
A doom so dreadful, so severe,
May happy fates thy footsteps guide,
And o'er thy peaceful home preside!

Embalmed in Art.

It was while Hawthorne, then surveyor of the port of Salem, was endeavoring, in the course of those long, tiresome days of work, to master the inspiration of a great romance, that the idea of embodying the Eliza Wharton story in his book came to him. At that time (1842) the tradition was still alive in the public mind as a scarlet memory. Hawthorne knew, as did every Salemite, of the ancient punishment for waywardness—the wearing of the scarlet letter "A" upon the breast. Many times, according to the colonial records to which he had access, this penalty had been carried out.

Having drawn upon the every day life of the custom house for his introductory chapter, Hawthorne seized upon the beautiful and unfortunate life of Eliza Wharton to embalm in his ambered art.

HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE DUKES—SOME OF THE PUZZLES OF THE BRITISH PEERAGE

It Would Take a "Hoyle on Titles" to Distinguish Between the Various Dukes and Earls of the Empire and Then He Would Be Excusable if Mistakes Were Made.

NOTHING is more puzzling to the uninitiated than the intricacies of British peerage as at present established. Many titles have become extinct, many more are dormant, others are owned as subsidiary titles by living noblemen. Indeed, it is quite difficult for a person newly raised to the peerage to find a designation to which he can lay claim without fear of treading on the toes of some older dignitary.

There are only seven counties in England which are unappropriated as titles. "Dod" gives these as Dorset, Gloucester, Hampshire, Middlesex, Monmouth, Oxford and Shropshire. There are also half a dozen large towns, including London, Liverpool, Plymouth and Brighton, which might be used as designations by new peers.

There are nine Scotch counties, six Irish, and two Welsh, which have no place in the peerage, while the Isles of Thanet and Wight are in the same category.

No [illegible] the authorities take much care that a new peer shall not transgress by taking another's title. In the past they were much less careful, as a perusal of the pages of any work on the peerage will make plain. There are no less than five Lords Howard, four Lords Grey, three each of Lords Boyle, Bruce, Douglas, Hay, Herbert, Hill and Montagu. There is a Duke of Hamilton and a Baron Hamilton, an Earl of Amherst and a Baron Amherst.

There are four Stuarts, or Stewarts, an Earldom of Landaff and a viscount with the same designation, but spelt with a double L.

The Bethune family title is the Earldom of Lindsay; the head of the Berties is the Earl of Lindsay.

Such instances might be multiplied to fill a page of this paper.

Equally puzzling is the great variety of subsidiary titles borne by the greater peers.

Foremost in this respect comes the Duke of Atholl, who possesses no fewer than twenty-two inferior designations.

The Duke of Argyll has seventeen, the Duke of Hamilton sixteen, the Duke of Buccleugh has fifteen; Northumberland's duke possesses thirteen, Abercorn a round dozen, Montrose has ten and the Duke of Beaufort nine.

Several marquises and earls are equally well provided, the Marquess of Bute, for instance, being the proud possessor of fifteen, while the marquises of Hunty, Lansdowne and Lothian own eleven apiece. There are, in all, more than eight hundred "buried titles."

Even more strange is the fact that a peer can, and often does, hold more than one title of a similar value.

The Duke of Richmond is four times a duke, and not only that, but three of his titles are of the United Kingdom. The present Duke succeeded his father as Duke of Richmond and Lennox, and in 1876 the Dukedom of Gordon was revived in his favor. He is also Duc d'Aubigny in the peerage of France.

To the Duke of Abercorn belongs the unique record of holding an English, an Irish, a Scotch and a French dukedom simultaneously.

There was some talk recently of giving the Duke of Fife the extra title of Duke of Inverness; but, as was pointed out at the time, such a creation would have no significance whatsoever, for the Duke of Fife would in any case take precedence of that of Inverness. For another thing, it is more than doubtful whether as the husband of the eldest daughter of the reigning King the Duke of Fife is not a "[illegible] Duke taken over." A "special remainder" was recently granted his Grace, and this, it is contended, makes him a "double duke." Some of the most serious of peerage problems are caused by the neglect of past generations to keep accurate records of the various branches of their families.

Consequently, when the older line of some ancient titled family dies out, the title remains in abeyance because there is no way of ascertaining to whom it really belongs.

Such is the case with the Earldom of Norfolk, a title which the Duke of Norfolk at present includes among his subsidiary titles. It is claimed by Lord Mowbray. The original earldom was created by Edward II., but fell into abeyance, and, in 1644, was granted, by Charles I., to an ancestor of the present Duke of Norfolk.

It now appears very doubtful whether this gentleman was entitled to the honor. Yet, once the Crown has granted a dignity, it cannot be regranted to anyone else. If, however, Lord Mowbray can prove his succession in the elder line to the original earldom, he cannot be prevented from assuming the title, and the result will be that there will be two Earls of Norfolk in the peerage. The Lord Chancellor himself took this view of the case.

As for baronetcies at present set down as extinct, it is probable that nearly all of them could be legally claimed could their claimants only prove their descent. There are between one hundred and fifty and two hundred such cases.

The baronetcy of Baillie of Lochend is one of these. Another belongs to the family of Burton of Stackerston. The fourth of the line got into trouble and was transported. No one has since claimed the title.

D'Oyley, of Chiselhampton [illegible] Duddlestone of Bristol have vanished in similar fashion. The last owner of the latter baronetcy is said to have been a laborer living at Banbury in Oxfordshire. The heirs to many other similar titles are to be found in the Colonies and in the United States, whither their ancestors emigrated generations ago.

Railway Traveling in Japan

When a Japanese lady enters the railway car she slips her feet from her tiny shoes, stands upon the seat and then sits demurely with her feet doubled beneath her. A moment later she lights a cigarette or her little pipe, which holds just tobacco enough to produce two good whiffs of smoke.

All Japanese people sit with their feet upon the seat of the car, and not as Americans do. When the ticket collector, attired in a blue uniform, enters the car, he removes his cap and twice bows politely. He repeats the bows as he comes to each passenger to collect the tickets from [illegible]